

10<sup>th</sup> July 2009-07-09

Ms Claire Moore  
Chair, Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By E-mail: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator Moore

**Re: Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills**

I write to express my great concern about the above bills. I understand that these bills will enable midwives who are employed to have access to Medicare funding, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and professional indemnity premium when they are providing care for women giving birth, and not for midwives in private practice.

Medicare funding for midwifery care is long overdue. It is not acceptable however to exclude midwives who provide homebirth from this funding and indemnity arrangement. By doing this Australia is totally out of step with nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands and New Zealand. These nations support the rights of women to choose homebirth and fund a registered midwife through their national health scheme. In New Zealand and the U.K women have a legislative right to choose homebirth.

The intersection of this legislation with the national registration and accreditation of health professionals will prevent midwives in private practice, who offer homebirth to women, from registering. I believe this to be an unintended consequence and ask that you take steps to include midwives who support women in homebirths within the Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) and related Bills.

I support a system where all consumers are treated equally, with the same access to funding and the same insurance protection.

Women must have choice for their birthing, this is a fundamental right. By taking away the registration of midwives who wish to practice homebirths to support women is discriminatory and anti-competitive. Women who chose homebirth do so with a strong philosophy of birthing naturally, have researched their options well knowing if complications arise, of course they want to have a healthy baby and will be transferred to medical care, With skilled midwives in attendance, any changes from normal can be identified and dealt with appropriately.

Jen Byrne  
Lecturer in Midwifery